is a play that has always worried me, and Dr McAlindon makes out a good case for the protagonist of Part I—although I cannot feel completely happy with his view that 'Elizabethans well versed in the Bible would hardly have thought of Tamburlaine as a damnable embodiment of ruthlessness and blasphemy. They are more likely to have fully endorsed his conduct and been thrilled by the fitness of word, action, and image to his predestined role' (p. 92). Certainly the *decorum* was appreciated and also (judging by their subsequent influence) the 'high astounding terms' promised in the Prologue. But would Shakespeare (than whom no lay Elizabethan could have been better versed in the Bible) have 'fully endorsed' such behaviour? In *2 Henry IV*, Pistol's mimicry is meant to be *funny*: isn't this a form of criticism?

The chapter on Middleton, however, illuminates that dramatist with a rare perception. Dr McAlindon prefers *Women Beware Women* to *The Changeling*; the former is a less thrilling play, but 'ultimately a more subtle and satisfying one' (p. 209). He sees Middleton as the most naturalistic of the Renaissance tragedians, whose characters have an alarming facility for deceiving themselves—and their self-deception quickly dispels any sense of guilt. Both the rape of Bianca (resulting from Livia's neighbourly hospitality) and the final murderous masque group themselves under the heading 'Treacherous Entertainment', and link *Women Beware Women* at last with *The Spanish Tragedy*.

Oxford ROMA GILL

William Shakespeare. The Complete Works, Original-Spelling Edition. General Editors, STANLEY WELLS and GARY TAYLOR. Pp. lxiv+1456. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986. £75 net.

This very large and very heavy volume is given a slightly misleading title, in that it contains even more than Shakespeare's complete works, printing in addition a number of short poems of doubtful authorship, a passage from *Sir Thomas Moore* usually attributed to Shakespeare but still disputed, a reconstructed text of *Pericles* 'by William Shakespeare and George Wilkins', preceding an unemended diplomatic reprint of the 1609 text of *Pericles*, and seven double-column pages of commendatory poems and prefaces of the period 1599–1640. There are a number of black-and-white illustrations, a general introduction, including five pages on the subject 'The Modern Editor's Task', and a glossary at the back. There is an essay of fourteen pages by Vivian Salmon on the spelling and punctuation of Shakespeare's time, and a list of important allusions to Shakespeare between 1564 and 1670. Room is given in the list of Contents to two titles, *Loues labours won* and *Cardenio*, and in the main body of the volume a separate place is given to each, in its conjectured chronological place in Shakespeare's *œuvre*: since neither work is extant, a single page is devoted to indicating the scant information upon which conjecture about their nature (and in the case of the former play about its very existence) is based. The titles of the plays are unusual in two other respects: several customary titles, *King Henry VI Part II* and *Part III, King Henry VIII*, have been replaced by titles which in the editors' opinion are those by which the plays were known to their first audiences: other titles, though still recognizable, have been scrupulously made to conform to old-spelling.

Some speculations are given firm endorsement. On the title-page *Henry VI Part One* is declared to be 'By William Shakespeare and Others' and although *Measure, for Measure* is attributed to Shakespeare the preface notes that someone, perhaps Thomas Middleton, seems to have supplied a new opening to I. ii; *Timon of Athens* is attributed firmly to William Shakespeare and Thomas Middleton. *The Tragedie of King Lear* is not attributed to Shakespeare and Others, although it is printed in full as

a separate version having 'its own integrity', being a revision of *The Historie of King Lear* perhaps dictated by 'theatrical exigencies', perhaps by 'Shakespeare's own dissatisfaction with what he had first written'. *Macbeth* is on the other hand ascribed to Shakespeare but 'Adapted by Thomas Middleton'. *All Is True* is attributed to 'William Shakespeare and John Fletcher', whereas *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is 'by John Fletcher and William Shakespeare'.

This old-spelling edition is one of several versions of the works of Shakespeare currently published by Oxford University Press. There is a modern-spelling edition of the Complete Works, which is rather similar in appearance to the volume here reviewed; there is also the series of separate works edited by individual scholars which is not yet complete; and there is the Shakespeare Anthology edited by Stanley Wells which appeared before Christmas 1987: it cannot be feared that Oxford University Press is neglecting the needs of different sections of the readership of Shakespeare. But although the production of Shakespeare's difficult texts in such diverse formats represents a formidable labour (in the case of an old-spelling edition, an excruciating labour at every stage, surely, including proof-reading one thousand four hundred and fifty-six pages of double-column print), it seems doubtful whether the old-spelling edition, however courageously seen through to publication, is without drawbacks. These drawbacks need not be unduly fussed over, as those who will use this volume, necessarily textually trained or being textually trained, will be inured to awkwardness as a characteristic of books, manuscripts, and their production, so one should first notice that this volume is strongly made and opens to display a clear and spacious page, with good margins, a double column of print, the texts through-numbered for each play and the scene numbers given in addition to Act and Scene divisions, thus facilitating reference to other works, such as The New Variorum. The decision to make it a one-volume edition has made the volume difficult to use (turning from one place in it to another is awkward because of the weight of the pages, and it takes up much space even on a big desk, when one is using other books as well).

Making it one volume has also meant excluding all collations and textual commentary, and anything save the most perfunctory comment on the textual situation for each work. The reader is given an admirably uncluttered text to read, but on the other hand he is not made aware of editorial intervention, of which there is not only a great deal but also a proportion of fresh, if not stimulating, emendation. Certain plays are followed by appendices printing additional passages which have not been included in the body of the texts, but there is no doubt that a reader needs to be exceptionally alert, even if he knows a play well, to read it through and recognize all the choices the editors have silently made. Should such a reader require information about the grounds on which the decision has been made, he must wait until a volume of commentary is published (no reference to this is made in the edition under review). Not to signal editorial interventions seems to me a real drawback in this edition. Textual questions must not infrequently be explored by examining the original copies themselves, or in photographic facsimile: to this extent, the representation of old-spelling can only be a limited representation of the texts in a form (to use the editors' terms) which Shakespeare's contemporaries would have recognized (p. xxxv).

In addition to the problem of presenting readers with texts, actually the product of critical editing, but having an unobtrusive appearance of fidelity on the uncluttered page, there is the problem of words in the text whose meaning is not clear but which do not appear in the glossary; perhaps the reader is expected to be sufficiently advanced a scholar to attack the problem for himself. In that case, perhaps the glossary is only a gesture, and other features of this edition which seem to be addressed to a reader who knows rather little about the subject are also only gestures. Certainly, as it stands, high-lone, this single volume is rather more of a dialectical

contribution to an immediately contemporary editorial debate, than its air of authority and physical similarity to a dictionary or Bible might lead one to suppose.

University of Zurich BRIAN GIBBONS

Shakespeare's Tragedies: An Introduction. By DIETER MEHL. Pp. x+272. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. Cloth, £27·50; paper, £9·95 net.

Shakespeare is distinguished as the one author invariably presented to every student of English Literature. A dubious distinction, perhaps, since being 'compulsory' seems to carry a corollary of 'needing to be properly understood'. In these circumstances subjective experience and free exploration of the plays tend to be dismissed while students grope for a reliable guide.

Dieter Mehl's *Shakespeare's Tragedies: An Introduction* is 'a rather free translation, updated and revised' of his 1983 book for German students. It is at least as authoritative as one would hope, with the bonus of reflecting a subtle and sensitive appreciation of the plays. Shakespeare's tragedies are grouped into 'Early' (*Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet*), 'Great' (Bradley's four), and 'Romans and Greeks' (complete with *Troilus and Cressida*). But the grouping is a little arbitrary and probably unnecessary; Professor Mehl's book is really a sequence of essays in which each play is taken individually and analysed on its own terms.

Discussion of the themes, characters, and tone of each play seems to arise very naturally in the course of a 'running commentary', with special attention paid to key scenes or speeches. Areas of controversy (in *Hamlet*, for instance, the Ghost, Hamlet's 'madness', 'the delay', and the play-within-the-play) are sanely explored, the emphasis being on the plays as works for theatrical performance, not as scholarly minefields. Of course Professor Mehl, like any guide, cannot be totally objective. Although his book presents no thesis he is clearly most interested in the drama of lost illusions and sees the tragedies as involving an audience in moral exploration. He is at his most eloquent in demonstrating the subtlety with which Shakespeare manipulates the audience's sympathies and challenges their response. Professor Mehl is concerned to reveal the plays in the light of their original stage and literary conventions, being dismissive of attempts to make characters such as Iago 'relevant' by forcing them into modern psychological moulds. Most characters emerge with interesting clarity, often highlighted by stimulating cross-references (comparing Othello to Dr Faustus, Cordelia to Hamlet, for instance). Only the more complex female figures suffer: Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra, and Cressida are rather complacently and superficially dealt with, their roles confined to the audience's understanding of the dilemma of the 'hero'.

Professor Mehl's book will undoubtedly prove very helpful. For each play the sources are concisely and constructively discussed and excellent footnotes point the reader to the best of mainstream Shakespeare criticism, supported by a thorough and encouraging bibliography. The original policy of appointing for reference his own preferred (or, as he says, 'the most up-to-date available') edition of each play is less irritating than one might expect. Unfortunately, despite wishing to 'discourage the illusion that there is such a thing as a definitive text', Professor Mehl has stuck to the conflated version of *King Lear*, limiting all reference to modern discoveries to a single, belated footnote. However, such a policy on *King Lear* is not surprising in a book which seems to be, above all, reassuring. If reassurance is what sixth form and university students of Shakespearian tragedy need, then Professor Mehl's book is to be highly recommended. It will be up to teachers and actors to provide the counterbalance of insights to disturb, provoke, and inspire.

Chichester CLAIRE SAUNDERS